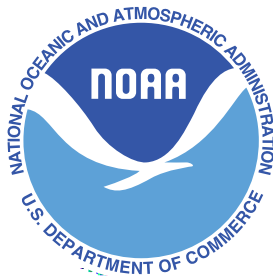


NEWS



THE
MARINERS'
MUSEUM

Contacts:

David Hall, NOAA

(202) 329-5827

Justin Lyons, The Mariners' Museum

(757) 591-7738

NOAA 03-088

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 23, 2003

NOAA DIVES INTO *MONITOR* RESEARCH AND RECOVERY EXPEDITION 2003

Newport News, VA - After five years of successful large artifact recovery missions, the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) today begins a four-week expedition at the *Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary to examine the condition of the wreck of the famed Civil War ironclad USS *Monitor*. The expedition is a cooperative effort involving NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program, the National Undersea Research Center (NURC) at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington (UNC-W), the Maritime Studies Program at East Carolina University (ECU) and The Mariners' Museum.

"This is going to be a very busy summer for the NOAA dive team in Hatteras," said John Broadwater, manager of *Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary and chief scientist for the expedition. "Our goal is to thoroughly document the changes made to the site after our major artifact recovery expeditions that ended last year with the recovery of the *Monitor*'s world-famous revolving gun turret."

"The *Monitor* expedition and partnership with the National Marine Sanctuary Program is a highlight of our dive season," said Andrew Shepard, associate director of NURC/UNC-W. "Saving the wreck gives us purpose, and the challenge of deep diving is a bonus."

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In addition to documenting the site, divers will survey the stern area of the wreck site, the boilers and the surviving lower hull structure, the galley area and will recover any exposed artifacts. Recovered artifacts will be delivered to The Mariners' Museum in Newport News, Va., for conservation and possible exhibition.

"This is a very important year for the *Monitor* team," said Jeff Johnston, NOAA historian. "The site of the *Monitor* has changed significantly over the last five years. This year's expedition gives us an opportunity to document changes to the site and record any further deterioration to the vessel."

"We are pleased to be partnering with NOAA for another expedition to *Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary," said John Hightower, The Mariners' Museum president and CEO. "In addition to providing conservation support for the expedition this summer, the Museum's conservation team will be hard at work treating artifacts recovered over the past five years such as the turret, engine and propeller, under the watchful eye of the visiting public."

NOAA will conduct all dives using sanctuary staff, NURC and ECU personnel as well more than a dozen volunteers from across the country. Weather permitting, dives will launch daily from the UNC-W research vessel *Cape Fear*. All NOAA dives will use mixed gas rather than compressed air. The use of mixed gas will greatly improve the divers' effectiveness and safety at the *Monitor*'s depth of 240 feet.

In 1975, the *Monitor* was designated as the first national marine sanctuary to protect the wreck of the historic vessel. The wreck lies approximately 16 miles off the coast of Cape Hatteras, N.C., in 240 feet of water. On Aug. 5, 2002, the sanctuary completed the last phase in a series of large-scale efforts to recover significant pieces of the vessel that were deteriorating rapidly.

In 1987, NOAA designated The Mariners' Museum as the custodian of the artifacts and archives of the USS *Monitor*. As custodian, The Mariners' Museum is charged with housing artifacts and providing conservation, interpretation and education. These efforts will be greatly enhanced in 2007 when The Mariners' Museum, in collaboration with NOAA, will open a new \$30 million USS *Monitor* Center.

The USS *Monitor* Center will be home to the priceless artifacts recovered from the historic ship and a worldwide resource for exhibitions, conservation, research and education related to the *Monitor* and the larger story of the naval history of the Civil

War. Information about the history of the *Monitor* and conservation and exhibition of the vessel's artifacts and archives can be found online at: <http://www.monitorcenter.org>.

The NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSP) seeks to increase the public awareness of America's maritime heritage by conducting scientific research, monitoring, exploration and educational programs. Today, 13 national marine sanctuaries encompass more than 18,000 square miles of America's ocean and Great Lakes natural and cultural resources.

The National Marine Sanctuary Program is an office of the NOAA National Ocean Service, which is dedicated to exploring, understanding, conserving and restoring the nation's coasts and oceans. NOAA Ocean Service balances environmental protection with economic prosperity in fulfilling its mission of promoting safe navigation, supporting coastal communities, sustaining coastal habitats and mitigating coastal hazards.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources.

On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

National Ocean Service: <http://oceanservice.noaa.gov>

National Marine Sanctuary Program: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>

Monitor National Marine Sanctuary: <http://monitor.noaa.gov>

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